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ABSTRACT

This guide provides basic information about the nature and scope of service learning and considerations in developing service learning programs for students in grades K-12. First, service learning is defined as a method whereby participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community, is coordinated with school and community activities, helps foster civic responsibility, is integrated into the academic curriculum or educational components of community service programs, and provides structured time for students/participants to reflect on the service experience. Discussed next are the similarities/differences between community service and service learning. The Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform standards for quality in school-based and community-based service learning programs along with the benefits of service learning in the following areas: personal, social, and intellectual growth; citizenship; and preparation for the world of work. A service learning framework is presented that includes consideration for the preparation, action, reflection, and celebration components of service learning. Concluding the guide are information on the National Service Learning Cooperative/Clearinghouse and a list of the cooperative partners. (MN)

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Pocket Guide to Service Learning

PREFACE

Service learning is a teaching/learning method that connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning, personal growth, and civic responsibility. It can be a powerful vehicle for real school reform at all grade levels, K-12.

It is important to understand what service learning is, and what it is not. This Pocket Guide to Service Learning provides the basic information needed to gain that understanding. It also provides the standards necessary to create the best in service learning.

You can maximize the service-learning experiences of your students by working to maintain these standards. Keep this guide by your side as you develop your program. You will be offering your students valuable learning experiences which will deepen their understanding, not only of the curriculum, but also of life.

DEFINITION

Service learning.

A method whereby participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that

- is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
- is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community;
- helps foster civic responsibility;
- is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and
- provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.

Source: Learn and Serve America, Corporation for National Service, 1995.

COMMUNITY SERVICE vs. SERVICE LEARNING

Service learning is initially a difficult concept for people to understand. That is because people have many personal experiences with and prior knowledge about community service and volunteerism which stress service. They immediately think of service learning as volunteerism (and get excited about the developmental benefits of such a program—empathy, an ethic of service, moral development, etc.). If there is one thing which educators most need to learn in this field, it is the *distinction* between community service and service learning.

What most people miss is that service learning is the *blending of both* service and learning goals in such a way that both occur and are enriched by each other. Service learning projects emphasize both sets of outcomes—the service and the learning—and design the activities accordingly. Most prominently, programs that emphasize learning always include a strong reflective component where students utilize higher order thinking skills to make sense of and extend the formal learning from the service experience.

For instance, the elementary schools in Washington started the adopt-a-stream movement in the 1970s, helping to reclaim some of that state's most important environmental gifts. At the same time, their service involved mastering a great deal of scientific knowledge (stream, habitat, ecology), language arts (writing public information tracts, writing to the city council), social studies (getting community support for their project), geography, critical thinking, and practical arts (building a fish ladder, a weir, etc.). Bringing service learning into the classroom becomes a method of instructional renewal. It is important to remember that it can also be used in co-curricular or volunteer settings.

Source: Toole, P. & J. Toole, *Communities as Places of Learning*, National Youth Leadership Council, 1992.

ASLER STANDARDS

Members of the Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform (ASLER) developed these standards to promote quality in school-based and community-based service-learning programs.

I. Effective service-learning efforts strengthen service and academic learning.

II. Model service learning provides concrete opportunities for youth to learn new skills, to think critically, and to test new roles in an environment that encourages risk-taking and rewards competence.

III. Preparation and reflection are essential elements in service learning.

IV. Youths' efforts are recognized by those served, including their peers, the school, and the community.

V. Youth are involved in the planning.

VI. The service students perform makes a meaningful contribution to the community.

VII. Effective service learning integrates systematic formative and summative evaluation.

VIII. Service learning connects the school or sponsoring organization and its community in new and positive ways.

IX. Service learning is understood and supported as an integral element in the life of a school or sponsoring organization and its community.

X. Skilled adult guidance and supervision are essential to the success of service learning.

XI. Preservice training, orientation, and staff development that include the philosophy and methodology of service learning best ensure that program quality and continuity are maintained.

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Source: *Standards of Quality for School-based and Community-based Service Learning*, Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform, March, 1995.

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

Service learning enriches the lives of all students. This teaching methodology provides developmental opportunities that promote personal, social, and intellectual growth, as well as civic responsibility and career exploration. Most young people have critical needs in each of these areas that must be met if they are to make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. Many favorable outcomes occur in each developmental area through participation in service-learning activities. These are listed below.

Personal Growth applies to the development of characteristics related to self-improvement and self-actualization.

- self-confidence and self-esteem
- self-understanding
- a sense of identity
- independence and autonomy
- openness to new experiences and roles
- ability to take risks and accept challenges
- a sense of usefulness and purpose
- personal values and beliefs
- responsibility for one's self and actions
- self-respect

Social Growth includes the social skills which are necessary for relating to others in society.

- communication skills
- leadership skills
- ability to work cooperatively with others
- a sense of caring for others
- a sense of belonging
- acceptance and awareness of others from diverse and multicultural backgrounds
- peer group affiliation

Intellectual Growth encompasses the cognitive skills necessary to enhance academic learning and acquire higher level thinking skills.

- application of knowledge, relevance of curriculum
- problem-solving and decision-making skills
- critical thinking skills
- skills in learning from experience
- use of all learning styles
- development of a positive attitude toward learning

Citizenship refers to the responsibilities of participation in a multicultural society and of citizenship in a democracy.

- a sense of responsibility to contribute to society
- democratic participation (informed citizen, exercises voting privileges)
- awareness of community needs
- organizational skills
- social action skills (persuasion, policy research, petitioning)
- empowerment, belief in ability to make a difference

Preparation for the World of Work are the skills that help students gain work experience and make choices about possible career directions.

- human service skills
- realistic ideas about the world of work
- professionalism (dress, grooming, manners)
- ability to follow directions
- ability to function as a member of a team
- reliable working skills (punctuality, consistency, regular attendance)
- contacts and references for future job possibilities

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Source: Duckenfield, M.& L. Swanson, *Service Learning: Meeting the Needs of Youth At Risk,* National Dropout Prevention Center, 1992, pp.7-9.

SERVICE-LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Preparation consists of the learning activities that take place prior to the service itself. Prior to their service experience, students must understand what is expected of them as well as what they can expect from the service project. Preparation components include the following:

- identifying and analyzing the problem
- selecting and planning the project
- training and orientation

Action is the service itself and needs to meet certain criteria. It must:

- be meaningful
- have academic integrity
- have adequate supervision
- provide for student ownership
- be developmentally appropriate

Reflection enables students to critically think about their service experience. When students reflect on their experiences, they think about them, write about them, share them with others, and learn from them. The reflection time is a structured opportunity for students to learn from their experiences. They can reflect through:

- discussion
- reading
- writing
- projects

Celebration is the component of service learning which recognizes students for their contributions. It also provides closure to an ongoing activity. Society needs to let young people know that their contributions are valued. There are many ways that this final component of service learning can be implemented:

- school assemblies
- certificates
- special media coverage
- pizza parties
- joint celebration with service recipients

Source: Duckenfield, M.& L. Swanson, *Service Learning: Meeting the Needs of Youth At Risk*, National Dropout Prevention Center, 1992.

THE NATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING COOPERATIVE/CLEARINGHOUSE

The National Service-Learning Cooperative/Clearinghouse was established in 1993 under the leadership of the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC). In collaboration with the University of Minnesota, the NYLC has developed a cooperative with numerous other universities and organizations around the country to develop a national clearinghouse for information and technical assistance on service learning.

Funded by the Corporation for National Service, the initial goal of the Cooperative has been to assist Learn and Serve America grantees and help educators and community agencies develop and expand service-learning opportunities for all youth.

The Cooperative consists of 14 partner organizations from all regions of the United States which act as regional hubs for information and program development assistance. There are Regional Information Centers, which collect information on programs and resources; and Regional Technical Assistance Centers, which provide training and technical assistance to interested people in their region.

The Clearinghouse provides information and referrals through its toll-free information number, **1-800-808-SERVE** and an e-mail address: **serve@maroon.tc.umn.edu.** The Clearinghouse also has established a national database of programs and resources, a materials library, and an electronic bulletin board.

In addition, the National Dropout Prevention Center, a partner in the Cooperative, provides information about service-learning programs and resources through its FOCUS Database. Call (803) 656-2599 to find out how you can access this database.

THE COOPERATIVE PARTNERS

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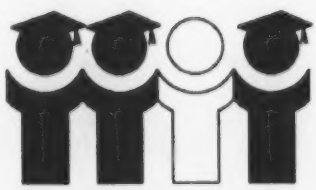

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